

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: What Would the S.L.P. Do?

A Schenectady correspondent writes this office:

Schenectady, N.Y., Nov. 23, 1912.

To the Editor of *The People*:—

Dear Sir:—In your issue of the *Weekly People* of Saturday, Nov. 16, appeared an article headed, “What Socialism is Not.”

The article gives a list of “reforms” which the Socialist party of this city has inaugurated since coming into power January last.

It then goes on to criticise the administration and the Socialist party, and claims that these reforms are not Socialism.

The Socialist party of Schenectady does not claim to have established Socialism in Schenectady, and they know very well that they cannot hope to do so under the existing capitalist laws, but I would like to ask the Socialist Labor Party what would they do, if by any chance, they found themselves in control of a city like Schenectady.

The “reforms” mentioned are a lasting tribute to the Socialist party and many a poor workingman in Schenectady has reason to thank the Socialist party for these same reforms.

But tell me, would the Socialist Labor Party control the city just like any capitalist administration, or would they sit in their seats and wait for Socialism to assert itself, without doing anything really worth while? It seems to me that the reforms mentioned such as cheaper ice (near-municipal) and cheaper coal (which is now being supplied), free school books, etc., which, although admitted to be not Socialism, are really big things, and that the present administration deserves credit instead of condemnation.

Yours for Socialism,
FRED ARCHIBALD.

No. 714 Hamilton Street.

Daniel De Leon

Seeing that our correspondent admits that the things mentioned as not being Socialism, in *The People's* article which he criticizes, are, indeed, not Socialism, the issue he raises turns exclusively upon the palliation—its usefulness, its application.

Although the posture of the Socialist Labor Party towards palliatives has been so frequently stated, and the matter has been treated from so many angles of view, a condensed re-statement will not be out of the way.

The S.L.P. does not object to any measure that affords relief. On the contrary, the S.L.P. recognizes the utility of such measures. What the S.L.P. objects to is to a propaganda that looks to relief in ways and means which deny the class interests of the proletariat—the only class interests upon which the Socialist Republic can be constructed. Such propaganda, and the palliatives that flow from it, not only do not aid in the rearing of the Socialist Republic, they hinder the same.

To illustrate with a concrete instance taken from the Schenectady S.P. administration itself, and well exposed by the S.P. Mayor's own ex-executive secretary, Walter Lippmann:—

Taxes weigh heavy upon the middle class, a class that it is part of the mission of capitalism to proletarianize, that is, pound into revolutionary material. An agitation against high taxes is, however, not an agitation founded upon the class interests of the proletariat. The reason is simple—the proletariat does not pay the taxes. The practical result of the false theory that underlies an anti-taxation propaganda is serious. A party of Socialism, that comes into municipal power after a propaganda that promises reduced taxation, lands in office smitten with paralysis. Hardly any of the palliatives that it should introduce, upon the scale that conditions demand and that the Social Revolution urges, is possible of accomplishment. It is not possible because funds are necessary thereto; and the funds can not be raised, because that would require higher taxes—a thing which the false palliative propaganda had condemned. The consequence is that, instead of mass palliatives partaking of the dignity of forerunners of the Social Revolution, instead of them, palliatives are fatedly resorted to that partake of the nature, the degrading nature, the revolutionary-pulse-deadening nature of ALMS, such as our correspondent recites—cheap coal, cheap ice and even free school books,

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which many workingmen's children are too poor to profit by—of all of which our correspondent correctly, and probably inadvertently{,} says that “many a poor workingman” has reason to be thankful for. Yes; many an individual, but too few of these to be the mass.

It should be superfluous to answer the question, What would the S.L.P. do if it controlled a city? Impossible for the S.L.P. to control a city without a clip-and-clear working-class-interests-propaganda having won the victory. With such a propaganda rendered triumphant at the hustings, the S.L.P. will not dole out alms to individuals—it will raise the condition of the mass.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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